

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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HA-05 /070 W
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R 171850Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9269
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
USMISSION SINAI
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 13105

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT EG
SUBJECT: WAFD ASSEMBLY LEADER ON REFERENDUM

SUMMARY: WAFD CONSIDERS REFERENDUM UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND COUNTER TO UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. PARTY WILL IGNORE RESULTS, WHICH EXPECTED TO BE RIGGED IN ANY CASE. SARAGEDDIN WILL REMAIN PARTY LEADER AND WAFD INTENDS TO FIGHT. PARTY PA LEADER CLAIMS REFERENDUM WILL HINDER PEACE PROCESS, EXACERBATE INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES, AND FRIGHTEN FOREIGN INVESTORS. SALEM BLAMED FOR COURSE OF EVENTS; SAID TO HAVE BEEN LYING TO PRESIDENT. EMBASSY HAS DETECTED LITTLE ENTHUSIASM FOR REFERENDUM, WITH MANY CONTACTS WORRIED IT WILL SIGNAL END TO LIBERALIZATION. GOVERNMENT CLAIMS ON REFERENDUM OUTCOME LIKELY TO BE HIGHLY SUSPECT. END SUMMARY.

1. REFERENDUM. WAFD PARLIAMENTARY LEADER HELMI MURAD TOLD EMBOFF MAY 17 THAT PARTY CONSIDERS REFERENDUM UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND CONTRADICTORY TO UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND WILL IGNORE OUTCOME. RESULTS, CONFIDENTIAL

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SAID MURAD, ARE FOREGONE CONCLUSION: GOVERNMENT WILL COUNT BALLOTS AND ANNOUNCE 99.9 PLUS PERCENT APPROVAL. THIS WILL BE A "FRAUD". MAJORITY OF EGYPTIANS ARE OPPOSED TO UNDEMOCRATIC MEASURES PROPOSED, RECOGNIZING THAT IF POLITICAL RIGHTS ARE ELIMINATED IN THIS CASE THERE IS NOTHING TO PREVENT WIDER TRANSGRESSIONS IN FUTURE.

2. REGARDLESS OF VOTE, MURAD SAID PARTY WILL NOT REMOVE SARAGEDDIN, ABDEL FATAH PASHA, IBRAHIM FARRAG OR HAMED ZAKI FROM LEADERSHIP POSITIONS, NOR WILL ABDEL FATAH PASHA RESIGN FROM PARLIAMENT. IF GOVERNMENT SEEKS CONFRONTATION, WAFD WILL RESIST IN COURT AND, IF NECESSARY, IN STREETS. PARTY LEADERS, MURAD SAID, ARE PREPARED TO GO TO JAIL RATHER THAN CAVE.

3. MURAD NOTED THAT ENABLING LEGISLATION WILL BE REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT REFERENDUM. HE HAS BEEN ADVISED TO MAKE WAFD'S CASE DURING PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE BUT DOUBTS THIS WILL BE EFFECTIVE GIVEN GOVERNMENT NUMERICAL MAJORITY. MURAD POINTED OUT PARLIAMENT WILL NOT MEET TO CONSIDER REFERENDUM UNTIL MAY 27, GIVING PRIME MINISTER 10 DAYS IN WHICH TO WORK ON HIS SUPPORTERS, MANY OF WHOM REPORTEDLY OPPOSED TO UNDEMOCRATIC ACTIONS PROPOSED.

4. MAREI. MURAD MET WITH PEOPLES ASSEMBLY SPEAKER MAREI MORNING MAY 17 AND TOLD SPEAKER SADAT ACTING AGAINST HIS OWN INTERESTS AND INTERESTS OF EGYPT. REFERENDUM GIVES IMPRESSION TO EGYPTIAN PUBLIC AND OUTSIDE OBSERVERS THAT COUNTRY IN DESPERATE STRAITS. THIS IMPRESSION WILL HINDER PEACE PROCESS, EXACERBATE INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES, AND FRIGHTEN POTENTIAL FOREIGN CONFIDENTIAL

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AND ARAB INVESTORS. SADAT'S CAREFULLY CRAFTED EFFORTS OVER PAST YEAR AND HALF TO BUILD IMAGE OF TRANQUIL, UNIFIED NATION HAS BEEN DESTROYED AT SINGLE STROKE. MURAD TOLD MAREI WAFD PREPARING MEMORANDUM CHALLENGING REFERENDUM'S LEGALITY WHICH WILL BE SUBMITTED TO PRESIDENCY ON MAY 20. SAME DAY, WAFD PARLIAMENTARY GROUP WILL MEET WITH MAREI TO PUSH THEIR CASE. THEY HAD REQUESTED SESSION WITH SADAT BUT PRESIDENT REFUSED.

5. SALEM. MURAD BLAMED SALEM FOR CURRENT COURSE OF EVENTS. SAID PRIME MINISTER HAS BEEN LYING TO PRESIDENT. ACCORDING MURAD, SALEM TOLD PRESIDENT ALEXANDRIA BY-ELECTION BEING CONSTRUED AS VOTE FOR OR AGAINST SADAT PERSONALLY, WITH WAFDISTS URGING PEOPLE SUPPORT SHEIKH ASHUR'S NOW INFAMOUS EJACULATION: "DOWN WITH SADAT." MURAD DENIED THIS AND SAID PARTY'S LINE IS OPPOSITION TO PRIME MINISTER NOT PRESIDENT.

6. SPEECH. AT ALEXANDRIA RALLY MAY 12 SARAGEDDIN SPOKE FOR THREE AND ONE-HALF HOURS, DURING WHICH HE STRONGLY ATTACKED PRIME MINISTER AND HIS GOVERNMENT.

SAID NONE OF EGYPT'S PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFULLY
ADDRESSED DURING SALEM'S TENURE. SARAGEDDIN
CLAIMED EVEN SADAT RECOGNIZED THIS AND HAD ORDERED
SALEM RESHUFFLE CABINET. STILL NOTHING CHANGED;
SAME FACES WERE PURSUING SAME INEFFECTIVE POLICIES.
SARAGEDDIN (AND MURAD) VIGOROUSLY DENIED WAFD HAS PRE-
VENTED PARLIAMENT FROM FUNCTIONING. SAID 320 OF 360 IN-
TERPELLATIONS INTRODUCED THIS SESSION HAVE COME
FROM MEMBERS SALEM'S CENTER PARTY. WAFD, SAID MURAD,
HAS QUESTIONED GOVERNMENT ONLY FIVE TIMES, ALBEIT ON
BASIC ISSUES. IF PARLIAMENT UNABLE ACT, BLAME LIES WITH

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 CAIRO 13105

CENTER PARTY WHICH ENJOYS MASSIVE LEGISLATIVE MAJORITY.

7. AL AHALI. MURAD SAID AL AHALI BLOCKBUSTER HAS BEEN
PRINTED TODAY UNDER BANNER HEADLINE: "NO TO REFERENDUM".
PAPER WAS SEIZED BY AUTHORITIES BEFORE DISTRIBUTION.
(AHAM'S ACTING CHAIRMAN HAMDI AL GAMAL TOLD PAO THAT
GOE HAD OBTAINED COURT ORDER FOR SEIZURE AND JUDGE NOW
CONSIDERING CASE. GAMAL SAID EDITION SO FULL OF
INFLAMMATORY ARTICLES THAT IT HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT IT
WILL BE RELEASED. ISSUE HAS SIGNED EDITORIAL BY LEFT
PARTY LEADER KHALID MOHIE EL DIN ON FRONT PAGE AND
OTHER HIGHLY PROVOCATIVE PIECES WITH SUCH TITLES AS
"IS THIS THE DEMOCRACY YOU GAVE US.?")

8. MURAD'S CLAIM THAT THE REFERENDUM IS NOT OVERLY
POPULAR, AT LEAST AMONG EDUCATED URBAN GROUP, RINGS
TRUE. EMBASSY CONTACTS ARE CLEARLY DESPONDENT OVER

IMPENDING ABRIDGEMENTS OF DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES. EVEN
EDITORIALISTS ARE DEFENSIVE. GOVERNMENT'S LACK OF
SUCCESS PERHAPS BEST DEMONSTRATED BY FACT ALL IT HAD
TO REPORT TODAY WAS RESIGNATION OF SEVEN MINOR
FIGURES FROM OFFICIAL LEFT PARTY. LABOR FEDERATION
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MET IN "EMERGENCY" SESSION MAY 16 BUT NOTHING EMERGED
IN SUPPORT OF REFERENDUM. EVEN STRONG SADAT SUPPORTERS
SUCH AS ALY HAMDI GAMAL FEAR SADAT, IN PRESENT STATE OF
"NERVOUSNESS", MIGHT GO TOO FAR. GAMAL TOLD PAO
SADAT FEARS LEFTIST EXPLOITATION OF ECONOMIC DISCONTENT
WILL CAUSE REPEAT OF JANUARY 1977 RIOTS. SADAT, IN
GAMAL'S VIEW, NEEDS COOLING OFF PERIOD AND HOPEFULLY
TIME REQUIRED FOR PEOPLES ASSEMBLY DRAFTING OF IM-
PLEMENTING LEGISLATION WILL PROVIDE IT. IN OUR VIEW,
HOWEVER, DRAFTING SESSION LIKELY TO EXACERBATE CONFRON-
TATION. EILTS

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